

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 07948 01 OF 02 171841Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 OMB-01 ACDA-07 TRSE-00
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P 171909Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0741
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 07948

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV PFOR FT FR
SUBJ: ELYSEE COMMENTS ON FTAI

REF: PARIS 7332

1. THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS AMONG THE FOUR SOMALI-BACKED GROUPS MEETING IN PARIS ARE CURRENTLY AT AN IMPASSE. ACCORDING TO ELYSEE AFRICAN AFFAIRS ADVISOR RENE JOURNIAC, THE BASIC REASON IS THE ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF CONFIDENCE AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS. NOT ONLY HAS THE RUMP AFAR REPRESENTATION TAKEN ITS DISTANCE FROM THE OTHER, OVERWHELMINGLY ISSA GROUPS, BUT THE LATTER ARE SHOWING EXTREME DISTRUST AMONG THEMSELVES.

2. JOURNIAC SAID THAT THE CURRENT STALEMATE IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE INSECURITY ALL PARTICIPANTS FEEL
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PAGE 02 PARIS 07948 01 OF 02 171841Z

IN THE FACE OF ELECTIONS; EACH GROUP RECOGNIZES THAT ITS POPULAR SUPPORT IS SEVERELY LIMITED AND IS DESPERATELY ATTEMPTING TO INSURE THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL BE ORGANIZED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT ITS OWN INTERESTS WILL BE FAVORED. HENCE THE PARALYSING DISPUTES OVER NUMBERS OF ASSEMBLYMEN, THE SIZE AND DISPOSITION OF ELECTORAL DISTRICTS, THE NUMBERS OF SEATS TO BE

ACCORDED TO DJIBOUTI CITY COMPARED TO THE COUNTRYSIDE, ETC. IN FACT, JOURNIAC ASSERTED, MOST REPRESENTATIVES HERE WOULD PREFER TO HAVE THE FRENCH TRANSFER AUTHORITY TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN TO TAKE THEIR CHANCES IN NEW ELECTIONS. GIVEN THE UNREPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER OF THE CURRENT ASSEMBLY, HOWEVER, THE FRENCH ARE ADAMANT ABOUT HOLDING NEW ELECTIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE LATE APRIL REFERENDUM. JOURNIAC WAS NOT CERTAIN HOW PRESENT DIFFICULTIES COULD BE RESOLVED, BUT INDICATED THAT SO FAR, ALL THE FACTIONS IN PARIS CLAIM TO DESIRE A POST-INDEPENDENCE FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE.

3. JOURNIAC DESCRIBED THE UPCOMING OAU-SPONSORED MEETING ON DJIBOUTI IN ACCRA WITH GREAT MISGIVINGS. HE ANTICIPATES THAT ETHIOPIA AND THE ETHIOPIAN-BACKED FTAI FACTIONS WILL CHARGE THE FRENCH WITH NEO-IMPERIALISM AND OTHER SINS, INCLUDING A PLOT TO STAGE RIGGED ELECTIONS AND THE DESIRE TO RETAIN A MILITARY BASE IN DJIBOUTI. THE AFRICAN RADICALS CAN BE EXPECTED TO RALLY TO THESE THESES. NONETHELESS, THE FRENCH PLAN TO REQUEST OAU OBSERVERS FOR THE REFERENDUM AND ELECTIONS, HOPING THEREBY TO SPREAD THE RESPONSIBILITY

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 PARIS 07948 02 OF 02 171841Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 07948

FOR WHATEVER HAPPENS.

4. TOUCHING ON THE TWO CHIEF OUTSIDE PROTAGONISTS, JOURNIAC SAID THAT SOMALIA REMAINS "REASONABLE" ABOUT THE FTAL. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE SOMALIS SEEM TO BE VERY UPSET BY THE SOVIETS' OVERTURES TO ETHIOPIA. ON THE ETHIOPIAN SIDE, THE FRENCH HAVE NOT YET FORMED A JUDGMENT ON JUST HOW IDEOLOGICALLY COMMITTED TO MARXISM MENGISTU IS. JOURNIAC FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THE ISRAELI ASSESSMENT THAT HE IS REALLY NOT AT ALL COMMITTED. FINALLY, JOURNIAC SAID THAT IN ADDITION TO THEIR CONTINUING CONCERN ABOUT WHAT ADDIS MAY DO IN RESPECT TO DJIBOUTI, THE FRENCH ALSO WORRY THAT SOME LOCAL ETHIOPIAN COMMANDER, PERHAPS UNDER AFAR INFLUENCE, MIGHT PRECIPITATE FIGHTING AFTER INDEPENDENCE. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PARIS 07948 02 OF 02 171841Z

5. COMMENT: WHILE WE FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THE FRENCH WILL PERSEVERE IN THEIR THANKLESS EFFORTS TO BRING DJIBOUTI PEACEFULLY TO INDEPENDENCE, THE FACT THAT JOURNIAC, FOR THE FIRST TIME, DID NOT BOTHER TO REAFFIRM THAT INTENTION IS INDICATIVE OF THE DEPTHS OF CURRENT FRENCH FRUSTRATIONS. GAMMON

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